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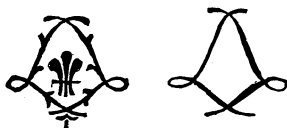
SOFT SÈVRES PORCELAIN.

BY EDOUARD GARNIER.

THE porcelain manufacture of France had its inception at Vincennes, and, thanks to the labors of its organizers, finally overcame the countless difficulties which it for a long time encountered on every side. It is well known how beneficial proved the generous support of Louis XV., who zealously strove to make the French of equal rank with the works in Saxony and the others which had sprung up in various parts of Germany. The manufactory of Vincennes had the most excellent beginning; it now only needed further development. The most esteemed and celebrated scholars, the most famous painters and modelers, were employed by the king, the former in order to investigate the best methods, the latter to design the most artistically perfect and elegant forms, to gather from all quarters the most superior models, to discover the most beautiful and attractive decorations, and to promote a successful result. All devoted themselves with enthusiasm to their undertaking, and we shall soon see how extraordinarily effective this asso-

ciation was which the king inspired with zeal for this beautiful industry. Unfortunately, the financial result did not equal the expectations; too much dependence was placed on the production of true art work without specially considering the mercantile element. The situation of the company was particularly critical, as the chief stockholder and founder of the undertaking, the Marquis von Fulvy, died in 1751, and the duty now confronted the company of repaying his heirs. In this crisis Louis XV. came to their assistance. The progress already made in the manufacture, the results which they had achieved in the sphere of the production of art work, were good enough for the king, without further hesitation, to publicly declare himself the protector of the manufactory. A second royal edict, of August 19, 1753, reorganized the company upon a new basis, and granted them an extended privilege for twelve years. The king contributed a third part of the capital of the company, and also conferred upon the factory the title "Royal Porcelain

Manufactory of France," and the right to stamp all articles in future with the royal device, viz :



Thanks to the success which rewarded the earnest and prolonged efforts of the newly organized company, the manufacture developed so satisfactorily that new articles were required. At the discussion of this question the necessity became apparent of a larger building than that at their disposal at Vincennes. In view of the fact that the factory should be placed as near as possible to the permanent residence of the king, the company resolved to remove it to Sèvres, which place, owing to its favorable location between Paris and Versailles, proved most suitable. Upon a level space, where formerly stood a small castle belonging to the celebrated musician Lulli, a new building was erected, and as early as 1756 the factory was formally opened.

From this moment it came less and less to be regarded as a manufacture which in its inception had so many difficulties to combat, and Sèvres soon became regarded as it is to-day. Nevertheless it is true that in Vincennes from 1748 to 1751 were produced those splendid pieces in soft clay which spread through all Europe the renown of the

French porcelain,—the "Porcelain of France," as it was then called.

In the first productions of Vincennes there were no painted decorations except the relief ornamentations in colors. There were as yet no porcelain painters in France. At St. Cloud and Chantilly, the only factories which then existed, the porcelain was decorated with applied ornament, while the inner surfaces were painted blue or in old Japanese style, with variegated stripes and lines.

The new factory had received the exclusive privilege of gilding porcelain, and they began to represent upon the bodies of small vases and in the centers of plates flowers and graceful little bouquets in gold, which afterward obtained their form and character by the manner of engraving.*

The necessity of progress was, however, soon discovered. An atelier for the decoration of the porcelain was needed. Next the painters of fans, then numerous enough, were called into requisition, and the enamelers, and both sought to apply to the decoration of porcelain the technical methods of painting which they had learned and used, although so little adapted to the new purpose.

The fan-decorators, usually figure-painters, were accustomed to use the so-called Gouache colors, and their paintings were at first hard and pasty; they made too much use of very light tints, either pure white or very pale. Little familiar with porcelain colors and unacquainted with the effect of burning upon presents quite a different appearance. In the old products of Sèvres the strokes upon the gilding are sharp, frequently rather deeply engraved, since the iron pencil necessarily made a deep impression. In the imitations as in the modern work the strokes are broader and not so deep, since the agate, instead of penetrating, is merely rubbed on the surface of the gilding.

* The style of decoration is a characteristic distinction of the objects which were decorated in Vincennes or in Sèvres. Upon the old porcelain the gold was thickly laid on, and polished and engraved by means of an iron griffel fastened in a wooden handle. At the beginning of this century this iron griffel was replaced by the polished agate, and the gilding treated in this manner

them, they generally used pigments without considering that one color is often eclipsed by another that has been strengthened in the burning, and without knowing that certain oxides lose half their intensity in the fire. Thence arose sometimes those singular paintings upon a succession of porcelains of this first period, with a green in which brown and yellow tones dominated, with brick-red flesh-tints and the like.

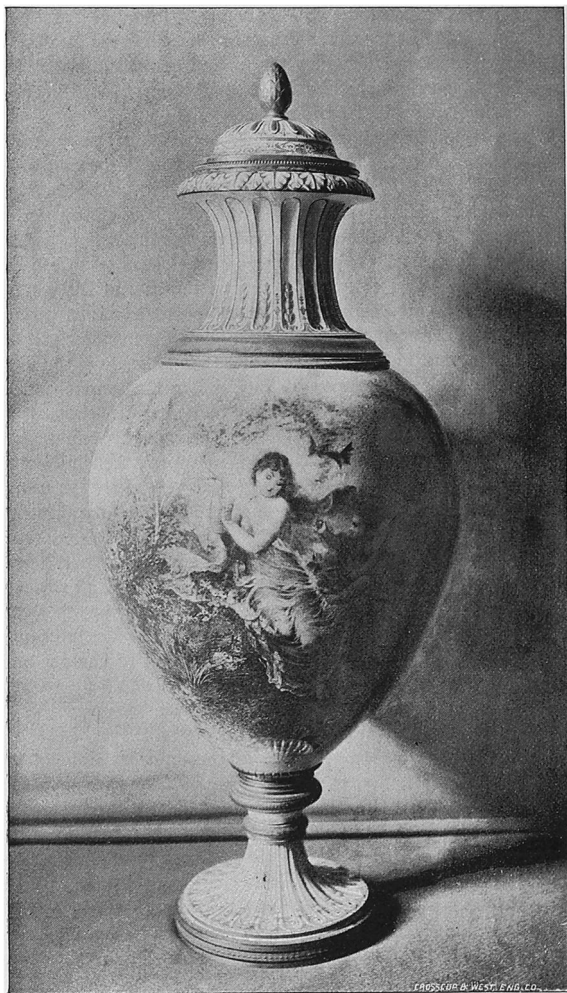
The enamellers were accustomed to the representation of flowers, birds, figures, and ornaments upon a smaller scale, as they were used almost entirely upon the decoration of articles of personal adornment and the smaller objects. The enamel that served them as a basis was already burnt, and had in its nature and appearance, especially in the white variety, a certain similarity to the surface of the porcelain.

Their painting is fine and elegant. The flowers are generally more drawn in color than truly painted; one can count nearly every stroke of the pencil. With the exception of certain barrenness, this manner was very well suited for these fine and elegant productions in their inception, and many objects painted in this manner may be considered among the most beautiful and charming art-works of French pottery; but, spite of all achievement in this direction, these porcelains could not compete with the German wares which were produced in more and more considerable quantities.

* Among the thirty-five objects with rose basis which were to be seen at the South Kensington Museum at the Exhibition of 1862, and which were gathered from the most celebrated collections in England, were eighteen from the time prior to 1753, and ten bore the date 1757. And in general one must often mistrust the alleged origin of old porcelain, at least when it is said to be

Afterward, as already mentioned, the company was reorganized upon a new basis: when the artists and experts whom Louis XV. had assembled had undertaken the direction and superintendence of the work, a new era for the ware began. It was at this time, from 1750 to 1760, that those beautiful and unexcelled art-works were created which established the renown of the manufactory, and gave it indisputably the first rank in the European porcelain industry. It was at this time that the Sèvres blue, also called royal blue, attained a fire, a purity, and a depth of unequaled excellence, in which the solid and bright gilding stood out wonderfully upon the fine milk-like paste; it was at this time that Hellot invented that beautiful rose which worked so brilliantly and excellently in tone, and was thickly laid on for a ground-work. Unfortunately the secret of its production was lost either with Hellot himself, or with those who produced it under his direction, since, in spite of the admiration it excited, and the application which it found, not a single piece has been discovered which could have been made after 1761. It is this rose which, abroad, and especially in England, under the influence of an amateur or merchant with rather lively imagination became known by the somewhat fantastical name of *Rose du Barry*, although the manufacture of most of the articles so decorated arose in a time when Madame Du Barry was scarcely born.*

old Sèvres. That is, for example, the case with certain vases which are called in uncritical manner *Vases of Fontenoy*; that they were not such is easily seen, since they chiefly show military scenes, also to be found upon a number of other pieces, and the representation of which was a specialty of the painter Genest, as a similar marine indicates his scholar Morin.



SÈVRES VASE, IMPORTED BY BAILEY, BANKS & BIDDLE.
DECORATED BY M. DEMONCEAUX.

In 1746 Hellot invented another color that found great favor for groundwork. It is the true Turkish blue of the Oriental porcelain. Upon a monochrome ground it shows a delicate and harmonious tone, but as soon as it receives a soft relief, the light plays and breaks upon it in such a glowing and flashing manner that one seems to see precious stones.

The manufacture made such progress from this time and the product reached such a height of finish and perfection that France, which, up to 1745, had drawn all her luxurious porcelains from Germany, in less than fifteen years arrived at the point that in France the products of the Royal Manufactory were preferred above all other porcelains, and were sent abroad with special pride, where they were objects of the greatest admiration.

Notwithstanding this flourishing condition of the industry, a dispute arose in 1759 between the Royal Commissioner and the company, which subsequently resulted in its dissolution.

The stockholders, whether rightly or wrongly, were not satisfied with the financial result, and required of the king new concessions. There was a searching examination of the situation ordered, and the consequence was that the claims of the stockholders could not be paid. The minister would not agree to the demands of the stockholders, and as they threatened to leave the company, the king ordered, upon the advice of his council, that they be repaid their outlay. By this means the king became the sole proprietor of the manufacture, which

he now granted a yearly appropriation of £96,000, payable in twelve installments from the royal exchequer; at the head of the works, as manager and administrator, Boileau, who had formerly filled the office, was placed.

From this time, as the manufacture was supported by the king, a stirring activity prevailed. The superintendents of the royal house also were intrusted with the administration, and the directors after Boileau, who especially considered the sale of the wares, sought by all possible means to raise and strengthen the manufacture financially as well as artistically — the one to show their zeal to the monarch, the other in their own interest.

In Sèvres less weight was placed upon new forms than in Vincennes, and only seldom, and always using already existing models, they manufactured those great state vases which are too expensive for the public, only serving as presents for foreign sovereigns and ambassadors; on the other hand, they addressed themselves fundamentally to the production of cheaper and useful objects in demand for the table, flower vases, flower pots, and the thousand miscellaneous trifles.

All these objects, although under the drawback of the fashionable forms of that time, were distinguished, with few exceptions, by a peculiar charm of fineness essentially depending upon the unequalled qualities of *pâte tendre*, which, with its soft and varying tones, will ever remain one of the most beautiful inventions of French industry.



PAIR OF SÈVRES VASES, DECORATED BY M. DEMONCEAUX FOR BAILEY, BANKS & BIDDLE.